

and if other individuals, have come forth with moral features of a strongly marked and consistently combined cast, from the infinity of miscellaneous impressions. If the process has been so complex, how comes the result to be apparently so simple ? How has it happened that the *collective* effect of these numerous and jarring operations on your mind, is that which only a *few* of these operations would have seemed adapted to produce, and quite different from that which many others of them should naturally have produced, and do actually produce in many other persons ? Here you will perceive that some one capital determination must long since have been by some means established in your mind, and that, during your progress, this predominant determination has kept you susceptible of the effect of some influences, and fortified against many others. Now, what was the prevailing determination, whence did it come, how did it acquire its power ? Was it an original tendency and insuppressible impulse of your nature; or the result of your earliest impressions ; or of some one class of impressions repeated oftener than any other; or of one single impression of extreme force ? What was it, and whence did it come ? This is the great secret in the history of character; for, it is scarcely necessary to observe, that as soon as the mind is under the power of a predominant tendency, the difficulty of growing into the maturity of that form of character, which this tendency promotes or creates, is substantially over. Because, when a determined principle is become ascendant, it not only produces a partial insensibility to all impressions that would counteract it, but also continually augments its own ascendancy, by means of a faculty or fatality of finding out everything, and attracting to itself every cause of impression, that is adapted to coalesce with it and strengthen it; like the instinct of animals, which instantly selects from the greatest variety of substances those which are fit for their nutriment. Let a man have some leading and decided propensity, and it will be surprising to see how many more things he will find, and how many more events will happen, than any one could have imagined, of a nature to reinforce it. And sometimes even circumstances which seemed of an entirely counteractive order, are strangely seduced by this predominant principle into an operation that confirms it; just in the same manner as polemics most self-complacently